

THE UK'S BIGGEST REGIONAL GAY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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ZONE

NOVEMBER 2017 ISSUE 247

We chat to

MARGARET CHO

ahead of her
comedy gig in
Birmingham!

CHECK YOUR BALLS!

It's Movember
Men's Health
Awareness
Month!

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JINKX MONSOON

RuPaul's Drag Race winner set to
cause a whirlwind in the Midlands!

SOMETHING TO SHOUT ABOUT!

Birmingham's festival
of Queer Arts &
Culture returns!

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One howl of a
good time!

+
**VIRAL
FASHION
GADGETS
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COMPETITIONS**

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Show dare you
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The festival of Queer Arts & Culture returns for 2017



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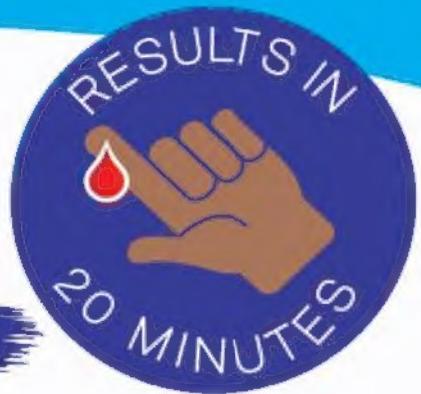


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Cher joins Mamma Mia! sequel cast

Pop legend Cher will be joining Meryl Streep, Colin Firth and Pierce Brosnan in the *Mamma Mia!* movie sequel, it's been revealed.

The superstar singer confirmed the news with a series of cryptic tweets.

Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again will be Cher's first screen role since starring alongside Christina Aguilera in *Burlesque* seven years ago.

The 2008 movie version of stage musical *Mamma Mia!* - based, of course, around the hits of Swedish supergroup ABBA - turned a huge profit at the international box office, becoming the highest grossing musical of all time.

Other cast members from the original film, Amanda Seyfried and Julie Walters, will also be reprising their roles in the sequel.

It's rumoured that Cher will be playing the mother of Meryl Streep's character Donna Sheridan in the new movie.



Participants sought for same-sex study

Participants are being sought for a research study exploring how finances are 'held and thought about' by modern-day couples.

The study, which is being conducted by University of Birmingham lecturer Charlotte Bendall, is examining financial independence within relationships, and the extent to which assets

Have ya heard?



Surge in homophobic hate crime reports since Brexit vote

Stats last month released by the Home Office have revealed a surge in homophobic hate crime in England and Wales following the Brexit vote. Across all types of hate crime, the number of incidents reported to police had risen from 62,518 to 80,393.

The large rise in homophobic hate crime - the second most commonly recorded type of hate crime behind racism - saw the number of reports surge from 7,197 to 9,157 (a 27 percent increase) in just one year.

Commenting on the statistics, the Home Office said: "In 2016/17, the police recorded 9,157 sexual orientation hate crimes, 8,558 disability hate crimes and 1,248 transgender identity hate crimes.

"The percentage increases in these three strands observed in 2016/17 were similar to those observed in 2015/16 when compared with the previous year."

are viewed by partners as being either joint or separate. Ms Bendall is seeking to recruit people of working age who are presently cohabiting with a same-sex partner or are in a formalised same-sex relationship (a marriage or civil partnership).

Participation would involve an individual interview with Ms Bendall, lasting for approximately one hour. The questions asked would allow the interviewee to reflect on their financial behaviour within their relationship.

The aim of the study is to ensure that family law reflects the society within which it operates. Interviews would take place at a mutually agreed location.

For more information about how to take part, contact Ms Bendall by email at c.l.bendall@bham.ac.uk.

Would-be participants can also write to her at Birmingham Law School, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT.

New guidance document for LGBT faith communities is launched in Leicester

A guidance document detailing the experiences of LGBT people of faith has been launched in Leicester by the city's Trade Sexual Health organisation, in partnership with the St Philip's Centre. Sexuality, Gender Identity And Belief: The Leicester Approach also includes recommendations for how faith and belief communities should respond to the experiences of their LGBT members. The document has been developed as a result of a project launched last year which explored the interface between sexuality, gender identity and belief. To find out more about the project, visit bit.ly/SGIBLeicester

Fitted-out café space in Birmingham LGBT Centre up for rent

A café space has become available to rent within the Birmingham LGBT Centre on the city's Holloway Circus. The fitted-out café space seats up to 38 people and has a fully functioning commercial kitchen. Birmingham LGBT, which owns the space, says the café would be suitable for a social enterprise, community interest or small business. Rent for the café is £320 per week, inclusive of rent, service charge, business rates and utilities. For further information, contact Steph Keeble on 0121 643 0821 or email stephkeeble@blgbt.org.

NHS funding PrEP would save £1 billion, study finds



According to a new study, funding PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) drugs on the NHS would save approximately £1 billion over an 80-year period. The financial analysis was published in the Lancet Infectious Diseases journal and conducted by a team at University College London (UCL).

Whilst PrEP is already available in Scotland, it is only being trialled by NHS England, with 10,000 patients being able to take advantage over a three-year period.

The study from UCL predicted that a quarter of HIV cases would be prevented if PrEP was given to men who have sex with men. If provided routinely, the cost to the NHS would initially rise, as it spent money on PrEP and treating existing cases of HIV. However, the cost would then fall as the infection rate fell. The expectation is that after 40 years, the savings made by and the money spent on PrEP would be equal. After a further 40 years, the prediction is that £1 billion would have been saved.

Birmingham LGBT launches #PrickTestResult testing campaign, to run alongside National HIV Testing Week

Birmingham LGBT sexual health services are running a HIV testing & awareness campaign that will incorporate National HIV Testing Week.

With large drops in rates of new HIV diagnoses reported over the past year, the team at Birmingham LGBT are on a mission to raise awareness about HIV testing and prevention. They will be out and about in city venues during the course of the month, offering 'Free & FAST HIV Testing' opportunities. These will be in addition to the usual seven-days-a-week 'access to testing' service that they provide at the Birmingham LGBT Centre. Regular testing, knowing your HIV status and looking after your own health as well as the health of your sexual partners, plays a significant part in reducing HIV rates overall. Birmingham LGBT's #PRICKTESTRESULT campaign will see the team offering accurate HIV tests, with results given in just 60 seconds. The tests are also available at the Birmingham LGBT Centre seven days a week. Commenting, Matt Lopez, Sexual Health Services Manager, said: "There's still a lot of stigma around HIV, which can make people fearful of testing, but there's a lot to be optimistic about. There are various prevention options available, such as condoms, PrEP and PEPSE (emergency HIV treatment). With such effective treatments for people diagnosed and living with HIV, this now means that they can enjoy a long and healthy life, and become virally undetectable - meaning that they can't pass on HIV to their partners. So whichever way you look at it, getting tested and knowing your HIV status makes sense. It just takes a quick fingerprick test. Prick. Test. Result." To find out more about where you can get tested, go to blgbt.org/pricktestresult. Alternatively, phone Birmingham LGBT on 0121 643 0821 and ask to speak to a member of the sexual health team.





Stoke sexual health team to offer free 20 minute HIV testing

The Sexual Health Team in Stoke-on-Trent are offering free and confidential HIV-testing drop-ins at locations across the city throughout HIV Testing Week.

The quick fingerprick test will yield results in just 20 minutes.

The team will be hosting the drop-ins in a mobile testing van at numerous locations across Stoke, and will also be visiting local community groups. You can see a full list of HIV-testing drop-in locations, as well as a demonstration video of the test, at www.20mintesting.co.uk

Have ya heard?

Lady Gaga announces rescheduled Joanne tour dates

After being forced to postpone the European leg of her Joanne world tour, pop superstar Lady Gaga has announced new dates for her Midlands shows.

The Born This Way star was due to tour the region last month but had to cancel. A spokesman for Gaga said at the time: "Lady Gaga is suffering from severe physical pain that has impacted her ability to perform. She remains under the care of expert medical professionals, who recommended the postponement.

"Lady Gaga is devastated that she has to wait to perform for her European fans. She plans to spend the next seven weeks proactively working with her doctors to heal from this and past traumas that still affect her daily life, and result in severe physical pain in her body."

The star has announced that she will be returning to Arena Birmingham on Wednesday 31 January and the city's Genting Arena on Thursday 1 February. All original tickets remain valid. Refunds can be requested from the original point of booking.



L Fest Awards 2017 announced



Organisers of L Fest, the UK's largest lesbian festival, have announced the return for 2017 of L Festive And The L Fest Awards.

Responding to demand, the organisers of the festive event have this year spread the occasion across two nights. It will take place on Friday 24 and Saturday 25 November at Sutton Coldfield's Ramada Hotel.

The Friday night features DJ entertainment and 'a warm welcome'. Saturday evening attractions include L Fest stalls offering Christmas gifts, an L Fest retreat - complete with a spa - a three-course gala dinner, and entertainment from Greymatter and L Fest DJs.

Tickets for the event cost £59. The first 49 people to buy tickets can take advantage of a discounted price of £49 when using the discount code 'earlybird' at lfest.co.uk.

The Ramada Hotel is offering cheap rates of just £65 bed & breakfast for a double room.

Local Life Story

Name: Lee Taylor

Occupation: Supervisor at Sidewalk

Place of birth: Tipton

Star sign: Scorpio

Age: 29

About Lee

Where did you grow up?

In the Black Country. Tipton.

Single or attached?

I'm attached, to my amazing fiance Mac.

What makes you happy?

My fiance, my friends & family, and Cher Lloyd.

What makes you sad?

When all the alcohol runs out at a house party.

What makes you angry?

People who do nothing except bitch about the scene but are always on it really wind me up.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

To be less lazy! In my free time, my most favourite thing to do is lie in bed and eat.

What's been the most embarrassing thing you've done in your life?

Which story do I tell! I embarrass myself on a regular basis! I really can't bring myself to answer this.

Would you consider getting married in the future?

I am getting married, and I can't wait!

Coming Out

When did you first know you were gay?

I think I always secretly knew, but would never admit it to myself.

When did you come out?

My last year of high school.

What was school like for you as a gay teenager?

It was actually okay. I had all the popular girls as best friends, and their boyfriends would always stick up for me and look out for me.

Who was the first person you told you were gay, and what was their reaction?

My best friend at school, Tara. She actually burst out laughing.

What would you say to a youngster trying to come to terms with their own sexuality?

Stop trying to be someone that you're not. Love yourself.



Have you ever had any experiences with the opposite sex?

I have! Never went back for seconds.

Your Career

When you were younger, what did you want to be?

A pop star! I'd still love that, if I could sing, but unfortunately I sound like Lilly Savage when I try to bust a note.

What was your first job when you left school?

I worked at McDonalds - that didn't last long at all.

What's your role at Sidewalk?

I'm the supervisor.

What are the challenges?

Some drunk customers can be a handful at times!

And the highlights?

I've bonded so well with some of the

Quickfire

Who's your favourite actor?

Cher Lloyd, I'm literally her biggest fan!

Who's your favourite group?

The Spice Girls.

What's your favourite book?

I've only ever read Paris Hilton's autobiography, and that's mainly just pictures.

Half empty or half full?

I never get what this means?

What's your favourite food?

A cooked beef dinner!

And how about your favourite drink?

There's nothing better than a nice refreshing pint of lager!

staff. They really brighten my day.
Where do you see yourself in five years time?

Hopefully management!

Gay Scene

How long have you been frequenting the Midlands gay scene?

Since I turned 18, so 11 years now.

What's been your fondest memory of the scene?

There are so many, but the night the Nightingale had Adore Delano performing was amazing. I got to look after her for the night and I got her very drunk.

Who's your favourite cabaret act on the scene?

I love Charlotte the Harlotte, Miss Marty and Miss Penny - all friends of mine.

Who's your favourite person on the gay scene?

Craig Smith and Lacey Lou. I love those two with all my heart. We have the most fun together!

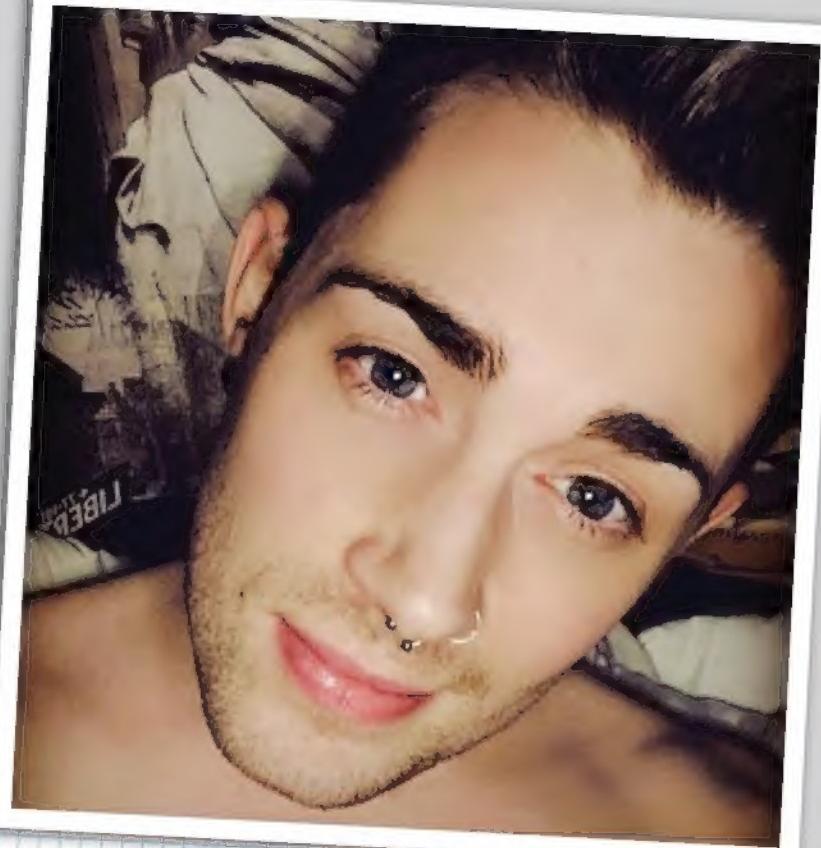
What do you enjoy the most about the scene?

I just love being me! And I can be exactly that!

What have you noticed about the way the gay scene has changed over the years?

The drag community has changed the most in my eyes. It's a lot more creative nowadays, and there's so much more variety.

How would you change the scene?



I would change the stigma of people thinking all gays are bitchy and two-faced. We aren't all like that.

Time Out

Where do you like to go on a night out?

Sidewalk, Nightingale, The Village and Glamorous.

What do you do to relax?

Eat and watch movies in bed all day.

What do you enjoy on telly?

Murder documentaries!

What was the last track or album you bought or downloaded?

Selena Gomez - Fetish.

Which one website do you spend the most time on?

Facebook.

What type of holiday do you prefer?

I LOVE camping! There's nothing better than sitting round an open fire in a field with your friends and just laughing!



Jinkx Monsoon

Zone catches up with actor Jerick Hoffer - better known as RuPaul's Drag Race winner and international drag superstar Jinkx Monsoon, who's touring to the Midlands this month with 'bawdy, rowdy musical comedy' The Vaudevillians...

How did you get the idea for Jinkx Monsoon, Jerick - and how did you first get started with drag?

I just turned 30 this September and started drag at age 15. Jinkx Monsoon is mostly based on my own mother, with heavy influence from the female comedians I admire the most, like Jennifer Saunders, Lucille Ball, Madeline Con - and more modern references like Sarah Silverman and Maria Danford. I really enjoy strong female characters, so decided to create one for myself to play.

You were already an actor and performer before joining Drag Race. What made you decide to do the show?

I went to college for theatre. It was a conservative style university where you got a degree in theatre with a conservative style education. When I started there, I thought I would give up drag to pursue a more serious and legitimate acting career. Part way through my college experience, I still had a lot to offer with the work that I'd done as a drag queen, so after I graduated, I started getting female roles in theatre - very drag adjacent roles. I realised that it wasn't something that I had to give up to be a legitimate actor; it was just a tool in my toolkit that helped me as an actor. Drag and theatre kind of run hand in hand for me. When I realised that, I thought to myself that Drag Race would be a great way to enhance my notoriety and increase my visibility as a drag performer, and that would then play its part in enhancing my work as an actor and theatre artist, which it absolutely did. The two have kind of boosted each other throughout the five years since I went on Drag Race

How have you found the experience of worldwide fame since winning?

I'm kind of shocked but in a good way - there are so many pockets of RuPaul's Drag Race fans throughout the world! Every time I travel to a new city and realise we have a following there, it's so awe-inspiring. Fifteen years ago when I started doing drag, I never thought that I'd be in the place that I'm in now. I get to travel internationally and put on shows

in foreign cities. It's kind of surreal that I have fans in Reykjavik, Amsterdam and Paris!

What's been your biggest source of inspiration?

I try and keep an open mind in terms of where my inspiration comes from. I get a lot from television shows. I'm kind of picky when it comes to TV, but so many comedians have been creating new and wonderful things lately. I also love watching cult cartoons. Animation and drag run hand in-hand; both are over-the-top in the same way. I think a drag queen is the only real-life artist who can mimic cartoons and get away with it. I also play a lot of video games, and that helps with inspiration.

Describe your show The Vaudevillians and the concept behind it...

The show's something we've been doing for years, but this is the first chance we've had to bring it to the UK. It's about two vaudeville stars who're frozen alive in the 1920s due to a freak avalanche accident. Thanks to global climate change, we thaw out and try to pick up our tour where we left off. We put on the same show we did in the 1920s, only to find that our most popular music has been reappropriated by pop stars throughout the last century. It features ragtime, Vaudeville-style covers of pop songs but put in a historical context, as if they'd been written for the 1920s. So Girls Just Wanna Have Fun is a song we wrote about the Suffragette movement; Toxic by Britney Spears is a homage to our friend, Marie Curie. It's all very tongue-in-cheek. We like to call it a fever dream.

You're working with Richard Andriessen - aka Major Scales - on the show, but it's not the only project you've worked on with him. What's the appeal of working together?

We have a very similar sense of humour. We went to college together, so that's how we met,

then lived together for seven years. By being in close proximity to each other, we really melted together our minds and our sense of humour. When we're on stage together, it's like we share one mind. The show is scripted, but we leave time for improv and ad libbing. Sometimes things happen on stage that have never happened before - a complete fluke or something due to a technical malfunction, or someone from the audience saying something. It's at times like those that we both often think the same thing and voice the thought at the same time, making it look like it's been scripted even though it hasn't. It speaks volumes for how we work together and the common thread between us. We share a very similar comedic brain.





Tell us about the new album, *The Ginger Snapped?*

It's a bit of a departure from our last album, which was very much a cabaret fantasy album. This new one is a '90s garage band throwback, with heavy influences from the area that we live in, in Seattle, which is heavily influenced by the hip grunge movement of the late '90s and early 2000s. The music is inspired by hero artists like Courtney Love, Gwen Stefani and Portishead - it's rock inspired and '90s grunge-inspired. It's modern but with the heavy influence of albums we bought in the 1990s.

Is there anyone you'd like to collaborate with in the future?

A big coup for us on this album is working with Amanda Palmer, a wonderful singer-songwriter who I absolutely worship. She's singing a duet with me on the album, as well as Fred Stainer from the B 52's and a cabaret artist known as Lady Riso. In the future, we'd like to incorporate more comedians into our work; people like Maria Banford and Devon Green, amongst many others, who I keep a note of.

Your successor, Bianca Del Rio, is working on her second full-length feature film. Is this something we can expect from you?

I was trying my best to be part of that film, but due to my work schedule with this tour, it wasn't possible. It was very much a kick in the pants for me and my comedy partner, Nick Sahoyer. He and I used to do a web show together. We used Bianca doing her second full-length film as a kick in the pants, so it was time for us to really lean in and write a script for me that's based on our characters. We're talking with producers about an inevitable *Moonsoon Season* movie - that's the name of our web show. Maybe in 2018 we'll buckle down and work with some producers to make a *Jinkx Monsoon* film happen.

Gender neutrality is a big thing at the moment...

Jinkx is very much a female, but I myself, Jerick Hoffer, don't adhere to one strict gender. That's mainly because I'm a male-bodied person who identifies with the feminine side of the gender spectrum. I've grown up with so many friends who've redefined gender for themselves. Because of that, I've made a point in the last five years of tearing down the idea that there are two genders, that that's all there is, and that anything in between is invalid. I believe gender is just a social contract that society created to make things simpler and more understandable - but it doesn't have any bearing on reality. Each individual person has the ability to find themselves for themselves. If we were taught that truth at a younger age, people wouldn't feel so worried when hearing about gender norms. I'm trying to tear down the idea that just because you're born with certain genitalia, you have to act, present and behave in a certain way, simply because our society tells us that that's the norm. In reality we can dye our hair any colour we want and wear contacts if we don't want to wear glasses. Just like we're able to dress ourselves every day in order to express ourselves, gender should just be another tool in our toolkit - one which allows us to express ourselves in the way in which we see ourselves on the inside. I think people would be happier if they realised that just because you're born with a certain set of genitalia, it doesn't

mean you have to behave the way society tells you to behave based on that.

Are you still a fan of *Drag Race*?

Absolutely. I keep up with it as an avid fan and still consider it my favourite television show.

What's been your response to Season Nine of the show?

I loved it. Every season I feel they broaden the scope of the kind of drag being represented. I love that *Drag Race* is further embracing and welcoming different types of drag. They had their first trans-identified trans-bodied person. The trans community and the drag community have always run hand in hand, and that representation is being allowed on television in a way that it's never been allowed before.

Would you approach the show differently if you had the chance to do it all over again?

No, I wouldn't tamper with it. I think everything fell into place exactly the way it was supposed to. But if I went back on as the winner that I am, I would try to show how much I've evolved as an artist. I'd also show the kind of strength and confidence I've gained since my season. I'd bring back everything people recognise in me from my original time on the show but also try to add to it.

What's been the hardest lesson you've learned in the world of drag?

We all need to take moments to realise when we're wrong, and to adapt and evolve. I think a part of drag is being headstrong, confident and assured in yourself. Part of being an artist is being adaptive and leaving room for growth and evolution. We all need to take moments to realise we don't know everything and still have a lot to learn.

How does *Jinkx* like to spend her time away from the spotlight?

Smoking weed and playing video games

Jinkx Monsoon & Major Scales' The Vaudevillians shows at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre on Sunday 5 November, Birmingham Hippodrome on Sunday 19 November, Leicester's Y Theatre on Saturday 25 November and Nottingham's Glee Club on Tuesday 5 December.

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Andreas - San Francisco

LET'S SHOUT ABOUT IT!

Birmingham's SHOUT Festival returns this month (Thursday 9 to Sunday 19 November), bringing with it the best in queer and LGBT artists, work and culture from across the UK and beyond. Each November, the festival ignites debate, inspires discussion, increases representation and showcases the work of queer artists across the city. This year's festival, the ninth edition of the event, features a programme of performing and visual arts which not only celebrates

queer identities and experiences but directly responds to the ever-changing world around us. It also acknowledges the significance of 2017 for LGBT people in the UK, marking the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Sexual Offence Act, which partially decriminalised male homosexuality in England and Wales. SHOUT is a place to celebrate diversity, push boundaries, challenge views and explore meaning, in the process providing a platform for the voices and experiences

of queer people. Conceived as a project by Birmingham LGBT, the festival has gone from strength to strength over the years, and has grown and evolved yet again this time round. Organisers say they're delighted to be working with such a diverse and exciting group of established and upcoming artists, building on existing partnerships and welcoming new partners and venues to the festival. Check out some of SHOUT 2017's highlights, below and over the page...

David Hoyle's Diamond

Thursday 9 November, 8pm
mac Birmingham | £9/7.50 | 14+

Diamond is an unforgiving queer performance of sexuality and British culture, exploring LGBT history from 1957 to 2017 through the personal biography of avant garde performer David Hoyle. Weaving together intimate personal accounts and landmark events, Diamond charts David's rise from a gay adolescent in Blackpool, through famous Channel Four anti-drag queen cult phenomena Divine David, to the performer he is today. With special guests The LipSinkers. Join SHOUT and David for the launch of this year's festival, including pre-show performances and live music in the mac atrium, and an exclusive afterparty with Queerzone3000 at mac birmingham.



MY Comedy

Sunday 12 November,
7:30pm
The Loft | £10/8

Following on from previous sell-out shows, MY Comedy is back at SHOUT this year to present another night of laughter and hilarity in the company of resident MC Maureen Younger. Performing alongside Maureen will be Debra Jane Appelby, Les Kershaw and one of the UK's busiest comedians, Shazia Mirza.



Rachael Young's Out

Sunday 12 November, 7:30pm
mac Birmingham | Free

Challenging homophobia and transphobia within the community, OUT is a conversation between two bodies. A new live art/dance performance, it reclaims dancehall and 'celebrates queerness amongst the bittersweet scent of oranges'. Embracing personal, political and cultural dissonance, this defiant act of self-expression smashes through the silence, summoning voices and reenacting movements in a fierce mashup of remembrance and reinvention.

Thursday 9 to Sunday 19 November



Trans Creative: You've Changed

**Friday 17 November, 8pm
mac Birmingham | £9.50/7**

In a world where genitals equals gender, Kate has decided it's time to get hers out on the proverbial table and explore what's down there and what's up here. Through song, dance, hard-won wit and wisdom, You've Changed sees Kate collaborate with choreographers, musicians and filmmakers to explore the ins, outs, ups and downs of transitioning. Has Kate changed, or is the world just catching up? The show questions how far we've come and how far we've still got to go. The world is certainly changing, but not fast enough for Kate.



Medea, Written In Rage

**Friday 17 - Saturday 18 November, 7:45pm
Birmingham REP | £20/18**

This contemporary reimagining of an ancient Greek legend of passion and revenge casts Medea as the ultimate outsider, a stranger in a foreign land, filled with rage. Her monologue transports us from ancient Greece to modern Europe and back again, in a provocative, blood-soaked collage of performance, opera and sexual confession.

Performer, dancer and vocalist François Testory fuses his extraordinary physicality, androgyny and unique stage presence with a seven-octave vocal range to bring to life the murderous Medea. Featuring live music by acclaimed composer Jonny Pilcher.



Cuncrete

**Saturday 18 November, 8pm
A.E. Harris | £12.50/11.50**

SHOUT Festival and mac Birmingham present a site-specific performance of Cuncrete, a no-wave, drag-king, punk-gig musical about architecture, idealism and how we ended up in this mess. Hosted by washed-up architect/proto-god figure Archibald Tactful with anti-virtuoso house band The Great White Males, Cuncrete is a gratuitously sleazy, joyfully noisy critique of alpha-masculinity and the built environment. Expect original music, grotesque posturing, sharp suits and wet cement.

Stay late into the night for an afterparty with DJs and an all-female line-up of performers from Club Fierce.



Pink Flamingos with the Conjuror's Kitchen

**Tuesday 14 November, 8pm
The Electric Cinema | £20.70 (inc. food) | 18**

Pink Flamingos stars infamous drag queen and cult director John Waters' muse Divine, who lives in a caravan with her mad hippie son, Crackers, and her 250-pound mother, Mama Edie, trying to rest quietly on their laurels as 'the filthiest people alive'. But competition is lurking in the form of Connie and Raymond Marble, who sell heroin to schoolchildren and kidnap and impregnate female hitchhikers, selling the babies to lesbian couples. Finally, they challenge Divine directly, and battle commences...



We Often Find It Necessary To Keep Our Homosexuality Quiet

Tuesday 7 November - Tuesday 2 January, 9am - 6pm
mac Birmingham | FREE

Marking the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales, SHOUT presents an exhibition of documentary photography charting the history of the Gay Liberation Front in Birmingham in the 1970s.

Told through the camera lens of one member, Ian Sanderson, We Often Find It Necessary To Keep Our Homosexuality Quiet (titled after the opening line of the Birmingham GLF Manifesto) is an intimate and powerful snapshot of the city's queer history.



Twiggy Birmingham: Slap In The Face

Friday 10 - Saturday 18 November, 12 - 5pm
Vivid Projects | FREE

Slap In The Face is serving 'a multimedia art show extravaganza' that penetrates the inner workings of the creative and twisted mind of Twiggy Birmingham (aka Christopher Twig). Twiggy Birmingham is an ongoing creative project spanning over three decades that takes body, costume, adornment and performance to the level of an art form. From androgynous punky Goth, through energy-fuelled 'club kid', flamboyant event host and walkabout artist, to outrageous stage performer, Twiggy Birmingham has documented experiences via photographs, video, costume and memorabilia.

SHOUT Festival Events / Diary

9 Nov	David Hoyle: Diamond £9.00/£7.50	mac
10 Nov	Tom Marshman: Kings Cross Remix £10.00	The Old Joint Stock
11 Nov	John Moletress: Untitled Cruising Proj. BOM Free	
12 Nov	Shout Out Free	mac
12 Nov	MY Comedy £10.00/£8.00	The Loft
12 Nov	Rachael Young: Out £9.50/£7.00	mac
13-14 Nov	And The Rest Of Me Floats £13.50/£10.00	Birmingham REP
16 Nov	Karen Mcleod: Barbara Brownskirt £10.00	The Old Joint Stock
17 Nov	Trans Creative: You've Changed £9.50/£7.00	mac
17 Nov	Medea, Written In Rage £20.00/£15.00	Birmingham REP
18 Nov	Concrete £12.50/£11.50	A.E. Harris
19 Nov	Jinx Monsoon: The Vaudevillians £16.50/£13.50	Birmingham Hippodrome
19 Nov	It Is What It Is Live Free	The Loft
During	Shout About: Workshops & Talks Free	Various
Various	Queer Cinema Various Prices	Various
During	Rory Pilgrim: Holographic Bonds Free	Various
7 Nov - 2 Jan	We Often Find It Necessary To Keep Our Homosexuality Quiet Free	mac
10-18 Nov	Twiggy Birmingham: Slap In The Face Free	16 Minerva Works
During	Leo Francisco: Qtopia Free	Birmingham Open Media
11 Nov	ECA EPS DIY £2.00	ORT Gallery
2 Dec - 15 Apr	Coming Out: Sexuality, Gender & Identity Free	Birmingham Museum

For more information about the ninth annual SHOUT Festival, and to see the full programme of events, visit shoutfestival.co.uk

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Birmingham LGBT

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*"I'm bi and
we're the
forgotten sector
of the LGBT
community.
They don't
really pay
attention to
us, but
we're here!"*

MARGARET CHO

Bisexual comedian, actor and activist Margaret Cho visits Birmingham this month as part of her Fresh Off The Bloat tour. Here, she tells Zone about her inspiration, explains why the LGBT community is so important to her and outlines the numerous challenges that it still faces...

When did you first discover that you were funny?

I'm still trying to figure that one out! I don't really know. I think that it wasn't a need to be funny or not be funny, it was just me wanting to be a bit like Joan Rivers. I saw her when I was a kid and just really fell for her. I wanted to be just like her. I was really young; it was right after I'd decided to be Wonder Woman. When that didn't seem likely, I decided to be a comedian just like Joan instead.

How did you first get into standup comedy?

I just started doing shows in San Francisco, where I'm from, and doing these different AIDS fundraising events in the early '90s. So that connected me very closely with the gay community. There were so many different kinds of things that I was doing, but I was really lucky because I was different in comedy. There weren't many Asian-American women doing comedy then, so it felt like I had a very special experience.

Where do you find inspiration for your material?

Everywhere. Right now it's pretty crazy - a lot about Donald Trump and even the Harvey Weinstein scandal. We all have these varied memories of sexual assault. I've talked about it a lot in my standup. Whenever something like that occurs, which I guess is a rare thing, but whenever people are coming forward - like with Bill Cosby or Jimmy Savile - you realise a very public figure has been protected. It's very disheartening and brings back a lot of bad memories of your own experiences. There's a lot of that in what I'm doing in my shows. I've been talking about rape, abuse and healing in my work for a long time, so this has more of a topic to wrap around.

What's been your best show ever?

It was great to play at Radio City Music Hall. I've done it many times in different capacities. I've also been kicked out of Radio City Music Hall for smoking pot up there. Apparently you're not supposed to do that! I was with someone very famous, much more famous than me, and both she and I got busted. I thought that because she was so famous we were going to get away with it, but no. I got to do my show there, but couldn't use a dressing room because I got kicked out.

How do you deal with hecklers?

I think you have to try and figure out how to use their own words against them

and trip them up. It's a little unfair on them because you have a microphone and you're going to be louder than them. I think people get intimidated by me because I can come off as pretty ferocious, so I haven't had that bad a time with hecklers. They get shutdown pretty quickly, I think.

You're bringing your tour to Birmingham this month. What can audiences expect?

It's a very topical show. It's very much about the bloated nature of our crazy politics. I don't even know if it's called politics anymore because it's so insane! There's a lot about Trump, the global impact he's having, the craziness of it all. A lot of stuff about Hollywood and how to be an Asian American in a not-diverse world there. There's a lot of stuff about rape, about sexuality, gay rights. There are so many things to revisit that I've talked about in my standup before. It needs to be expanded.

The last time you performed in the UK was in 2015. Are you excited to be making a return visit?

Yeah, I love it. I have a great time here. The audiences are far more sophisticated because they're used to the best comedians doing a different show every year. So everyone comes back with new material. It's always very exciting. My favourite people are Stephen K Amos and Paul Foot. I really enjoy seeing them. They really typify the excellence of British comedy.

Is there a difference between UK and American audiences?

I think there is, because everybody is very familiar with their comedians. They see them over and over, and in different ways across the years, so they get to know them better. There's a kind of familiarity with their comedians. So I come in and I'm different. It's really challenging, but I love it.

Which other comedians do you most admire?

There are lots. People like Sarah Silverman, who's a good friend of mine. Kathy Griffin's also a good friend. There are so many great comedians now who are very drilled. I love it.

You're not only a comedian but an actor too. How did that come about?

I was always doing little things over the years. I had my own TV show for a while in the '90s. So there was always

something. Lately there's been more that's centred around my comedy. There are things that have been developed from my standup. I've just developed a show called Highland. We just wrapped up the pilot recently. We'll see what's going to happen with it, but it's very good. It's very true to life, and features a very different kind of Asian family that we haven't seen before.

Is there a dream role or show you'd like to act in?

I just want to focus on Highland. I'd like to complete the trajectory of the story. That's something I would love to do.

A significant element of your material addresses LGBT issues. Why are those issues so important to you?

Well, I'm part of the community. I'm bisexual and we're the forgotten sector of the LGBT community. They don't really pay attention to us, but we're here! That's funny to me - the lack of understanding of the bisexual community from both sides, both gay and straight. Also, I grew up in the gay community. I always knew that I would be political. It's part of my life and part of my upbringing. It's a very safe place for me to be, and a place I understand well.

What do you feel still needs to be achieved in terms of the LGBT community across the world?

Well, there's got to be a stop to bans on transgender people in the military. And this idea that you can somehow ban an entire community from using a bathroom. There are so many crazy ideas that conservatives have about the transgender community - ideas that it's dangerous for people to believe. There's been so much progress, but also a lot of ignorance and fear about who we are.

Do you see yourself as a role model for the community?

I don't want to say that I'm a role model, but I try. I'd like to be. That would be great. Ultimately I'm just trying to be one small voice of reason, trying to make a difference and hopefully bring about change.

Margaret Cho brings her Fresh Off The Bloat comedy tour to Birmingham's Glee Club on Wednesday 29 November.

Tickets are now available at livenation.co.uk

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#HIVTestWeek

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CHECK YOUR BALLS!

With Movember and Men's Health Awareness Month making a welcome return for another year, Zone takes a look at the issues surrounding testicular cancer and explains how to detect it early...

It's November - and that means it must also be Movember!
For those not in the Mo - sorry, know - Movember is the time of year when men everywhere take on the challenge of growing a moustache, to help raise funds for the treatment of diseases such as testicular and prostate cancer.

Cancer Research UK's most recent figures, published back in 2014, show that testicular cancer is the 16th most common cancer in men in the UK, with around 2,400 cases diagnosed every year.

Although a rare cancer, almost half of those diagnosed with testicular cancer are under the age of 35.

Of those diagnosed, however, a staggeringly impressive 98% survive - in 2014, 60 deaths from the cancer were reported.

Sadly, it isn't clear how many cases of testicular cancer are preventable, as it's not clearly linked to any preventable risk factors.

Cancer Research UK believe that the incidence rate for testicular cancer is set to rise by 12% between now and 2035 - at which point, they forecast, there will be 10 cases diagnosed per every 100,000 males.

However, it's not all doom and gloom. If you're diagnosed with testicular cancer, your chances of surviving are improving year on year because of 'combination chemotherapy'. It's said that when diagnosed at its earliest stage, all men with the disease survive for five years or more,

"Although a rare cancer, almost half of those diagnosed with testicular cancer are under the age of 35"

compared with around eight in 10 men who get diagnosed at its latest stage

Experts believe that problems 'down there' are on the increase due to a lack of awareness about the importance of conducting a regular testicular self examination.

So, do you know how to check for testicular cancer? Here's our handy guide:

HOW TO CHECK YOURSELF

It's recommended that you check yourself at least once per month, ideally after a hot bath or shower, when your scrotal skin is relaxed.

- First, look at yourself in the mirror and get to know your balls. Look at the size and shape of each testicle - everyone's are different!
- Hold the scrotal skin in the palms of your hands and examine each testicle at a time
- Use both of your hands to gently roll each testicle (with slight pressure) between your fingers.

• Place your thumbs over the top of the testicle and gently roll. You should be able to feel the epididymis (the tube that carries sperm). This feels rope-like and soft - and slightly tender when you apply gentle pressure

• Remember - It's completely normal to have one testicle larger than the other!

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

So what are you looking for when checking your balls?

- A hard lump, shaped like a pea, on the front or sides of your testicles
- Swelling or enlargement of a testicle.
- An increase in firmness
- Pain or discomfort, or a heavy feeling in your balls.
- A dull ache or an unusual difference between one ball and the other

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A LUMP

If, while checking yourself, you find something, don't be embarrassed to have a chat with your doctor. Early detection is key to a better outcome, as cases that are diagnosed early are easier to treat.

For more information about testicular cancer, visit Cancer Research UK at cancerresearchuk.org

To find out more about Movember fundraising activities, visit uk.movember.com



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Wolves Pride 2017

proves a howling success!

The end of September saw the return of Wolves Pride, the city of Wolverhampton's very own LGBT festival.

Organisers reckon more than 7,000 free tickets were claimed and judging by the pictures, it looks like the event was a huge success! Wolves Pride also attempted to break the record for the greatest number of people to simultaneously howl like a wolf! We're yet to hear whether their effort will stand or not!



SHOULD WE TURN BRUM'S GAY VILLAGE GREEN?

Following the introduction of a 'parklet' outside The Loft last month, we asked you whether a more permanent green space is needed in the Birmingham gay village...



The new 'parklet'



Sackville Gardens in Manchester



Brindleyplace's park could be considered

A new initiative designed to bring green spaces to city centres has included the arrival of a parklet in the heart of Birmingham's gay village.

The parklet was installed by the Southside Business Improvement District outside gay venue The Loft on Bromsgrove Street - and it's certainly been gaining a lot of attention...

In fact, the innovation has proved so popular that it's already been nominated for the 'UK's Best Park, as voted by YOU! 2017' awards.

Featuring seating, greenery and a solar-powered information point, the parklet aims to bring a bit of greenery

to an urban area where nature is lacking

That's all well and good, but what it also made us realise is that we want a park! A nice big park with real green grass, trees, benches and picnic tables that the LGBT community of Birmingham and beyond can enjoy.

A park could also bring about the return of the Community Village Green event at Birmingham Pride - a popular free aspect of the UK's largest two-day LGBT festival.

Manchester has Sackville Gardens, adjacent to the ever-popular Canal Street gay district - a popular destination all year round, not just

during Manchester Pride.

But considering the amount of residential construction in Brum's gay village, where could a park be located?

Well, we had a scout around the village and came to the conclusion that the car park on Hurst Street (opposite Sidewalk and next to The Village Inn) would be a fantastic central location.

Does Southside really need more apartments, shops and restaurants? Instead, imagine sunny days spent relaxing in the park before heading out to Eden for a pint or two. Sounds like paradise, right?...

Should a park be added to Birmingham's Gay Village, to bring the LGBT community together to an even greater extent? Here's what you had to say on Facebook...



Yes, a green space would be beneficial for anyone using or passing through the area. I'm sure there'll be opportunities to create a pocket park or garden at some point.

David Viney, Birmingham



It's a fantastic idea. It would be good to see a space that could be used for many different community based things and potential events Sackville Gardens, Manchester, and the gardens in Soho Square, London, are good examples of spaces well used.

Adam Kennedy, Walsall

In light of the various comments about apartments etc, I can't work out if the

proposition is akin to 'dangling a carrot' or 'carrot and stick'. We shall see. It would be lovely to have a green space down there, and would provide much-needed respite amid all the concrete that is the gay village.

Glen Chevannes, Birmingham



This again? Weren't they doing this, like, five or six years ago and it never went ahead? It was supposed to be a memorial garden in the same place. About time it was actually done instead of being talked about year after year with nothing getting done.

Lisa Bennett, Birmingham



Keep the car park. It brings in money and there's plenty of green space at St Philip's Cathedral. A 20 minute walk (to the park) is good exercise!

David Wall, Birmingham



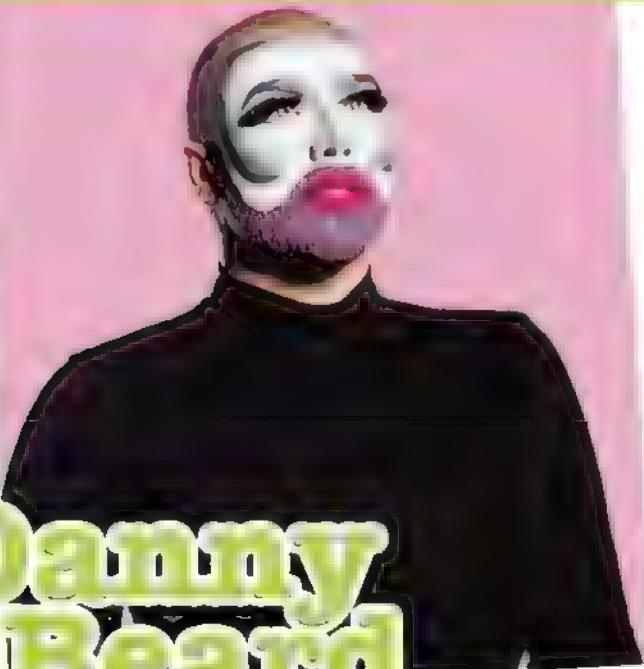
I think it would be a great idea trees, benches, grass, somewhere where people could sit, relax, sunbathe

Fantastic idea. The only thing I would suggest is that it's fenced off and locked at a certain time, to stop it becoming a place for kids and homeless people to congregate.

Garry Prentice, co-owner of Eden Bar in Birmingham

What's On

Wed 1 - Sun 5 November



Danny Beard is Back in Brum!

If you're after a glitter-filled night out, look no further than a couple of hours in the company of sassy scouser Danny Beard. A regular at Eden Bar, he'll treat you to an evening of fantastic comedy and fabulous vocals. You're sure to be blown away by one of the scene's finest talents!

Saturday 4 November - Eden, Birmingham

Miss Jason takes to the stage in Brum

Kickstarting a month of Friday night cabaret at award-winning gay venue The Village Inn is Miss Jason.

Not only is there live entertainment to enjoy, there's also a host of DJs across the night and plenty of drinks offers

Friday 3 November -
The Village Inn,
Birmingham



Marty's Party heads to Coventry

Everyone's favourite trans icon Marty's Party is coming to Coventry! The award-winning drag queen and her crew will be performing at The Yard on Friday 3rd November.

Friday 3 November
The Yard, Coventry

A fond farewell to Lip Gloss at Eden

It's time to bid a fond farewell to a great community night out at Birmingham's Eden Bar. Lip Gloss - a fantastic evening dedicated to the city's trans community, their friends and admirers - will be holding its last ever event at the award winning gay venue on Friday the 3rd. So be sure to head down there and offer your support just one last time!

Friday 3 November - Eden, Birmingham

£1.50 Bombs every Thursday at Sidewalk

If you're a fan of Jagerbombs, Skittlebombs or Buccsbombs, then Sidewalk is the place to be every Thursday. You can get these, along with many more flavours, for just £1.50! Bombs away, kids, bombs away!

Every Thursday
Sidewalk, Birmingham



THE VILLAGE INN

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FRIDAY NIGHT CABARET

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- 10 - DRAG WITH NO NAME
- 17 - MISS THUNDERPUSSY
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What's On

Mon 6 - Sun 12 November



Sandra returns to Shrewsbury!

Over in Shrewsbury there's a new look Fabulous Mondays this month! Miss Penny will be joining them on selected Mondays (see Facebook for dates) DJing all night from 10pm until the early hours! There's also live cabaret on the first Monday of the month with Sandra returning for November.

Miss Penny's Fabulous Mondays every Monday & Sandra on Monday 6 November - C:21, Shrewsbury



Charlie Hides RuPaul star in Brum!

RuPaul's Drag Race star and Eden Bar favourite Charlie Hides returns for a night of cabaret and comedy in Birmingham's gay village. Although now internationally famous thanks to the hit TV show, she still has a soft spot for her fans in Brum! Check her out - she's great!

Saturday 11 November - Eden, Birmingham

Life is a cabaret with Miss Thunderpussy at The Village Inn!

Continuing with the November line up of Friday night cabaret, The Village Inn welcome Miss Thunderpussy to the stage on the 10th. Expect a great show, with lots of laughs to boot! It's the perfect way to start the weekend!

Friday 10 November - The Village Inn, Birmingham



Fanny fun in Coventry!



Every Friday is live cabaret night at The Yard in Coventry hosted by Rockella Brown. The ever-wonderful Fanny Burns heads to the venue this month. The potty mouthed drag queen always has her audience in stitches, so we recommend you pop in and check her out!

Friday 10 November - The Yard, Coventry

Crystal Lubrikunt heads to Missing!

There's a nice little line-up of cabaret at Birmingham's Missing Bar this month. Join DJ and host LaQueefa every Sunday, with a special performance on the 12th from Crystal Lubrikunt. It's going to be a great way to end the weekend!

Sunday 12 November - Missing Bar, Birmingham



What's On

Mon 13 - Sun 19 November



Rubber-dub-dub! Birmingham Fetish Men returns to Eden Bar

Into rubber, leather and all the other fetishes you can shake a stick at? Then this is the get together for you! Featuring a strict dress code, the event sees hundreds of fetish men descend on Eden Bar for a night spent mingling with other like-minded fellas!

Saturday 18 November - Eden, Birmingham

Drag With No Name returns to The Village

Returning once again to Birmingham's Village Inn is one of Zone's favourite cabaret acts - the incredible Drag With No Name! Expect plenty of fun and laughter, not to mention alternative and downright rude lyrics to some of your favourite songs!

Friday 17 November - The Village Inn,
Birmingham



Grab a great roast at The Loft



Look no further than The Loft for your hangover-soothing Sunday lunch! With an impressive selection of meats available, you'll be hard-pressed to find a better offer

Every Sunday -
The Loft,
Birmingham



Cocktail time at Sidewalk!

Fancy joining us for a cocktail or several at Sidewalk? They're two for one from midday till 8pm every day - or all day on a Monday! Which one will you choose?

Every day at Sidewalk,
Birmingham

BINGO! Play with Queeny's balls!



Monday nights see local drag star Queeny hosting her very own bingo event at award-winning gay venue The Village Inn. It's a great night out and offers you the chance to win £100 each and every week. Not only that, you also get drinks for £1 all night!

Every Monday - The Village
Inn, Birmingham

Leather Social at Birmingham gay bar

Are you a fan of all things leather?... You are?... Then this is the event for you! The Leather Social returns to Birmingham's Eden Bar on the third Sunday of the month, offering a friendly, relaxed atmosphere in which lovers of leather and their admirers can connect.

Got some leather? What are you waiting for?!

Sunday 19 November - Eden, Birmingham

We are open every day from 2pm

NOVEMBER ARTISTES



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After 5 fabulous years we say
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4th

DANNY BEARD

THUR
9th

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SAT
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CHARLIE HIDES

THUR
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SAT
18th

BFM

2nd Birthday Party
with LA VOIX

SUN
19th

LEATHER SOCIAL

FRI
24th

MIDS BEARS

SAT
25th

MARY MAC

with special guest
KY KELLY

THUR
30th

LA VOIX

SAT
18th

BFM

2nd Birthday
LA VOIX

SUN
19th



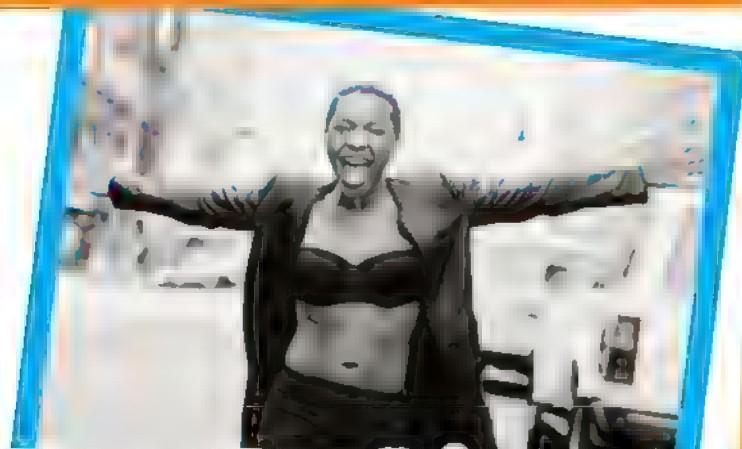
FRI
24th

MIDSBEARS

EVERY FRI & SUN KARAOKE & DISCO DJ NIKKI

what's On

Mon 20 - Thur 30 November



The Yard is set to Feel So Good with Sonique!

It's all going on at Coventry gay bar The Yard this month. The highlight is an appearance by '90s dance vocalist Sonique. The *It Feels So Good* singer will be performing live at the venue on the last Saturday of the month, so be certain to get down early for this sure-to-be fantastic event!

Saturday 25 November - The Yard, Coventry



The Midlands' biggest and boldest men-only club night is back in its new slot - the last Friday of each month. With resident DJ and producer Paul Morrell providing the soundtrack to the night, the award-winning event sees hundreds of men - from bears to cubs and everything in between - partying the night away.

Friday 27 October - The Core Club, Birmingham



Let's get Pounded

Get Pounded every Thursday at Birmingham gay superclub The Nightingale! As well as £1 drinks offers galore, there's also the brand spanking new 'alternative and indie' room to enjoy in the company of DJ Soriah. What's not to like?

Furry fun with MidsBears

If you're a bear, or a friend of the bear community at large, then pop down to MidsBears at Eden every fourth Friday of the month. It's a great night out and attracts a fab crowd. Check it out - you'll love it!

Friday 24 November - Eden, Birmingham

Sandra returns to The Village Inn!



The Whore of Hampstead Heath returns home to Birmingham for her monthly residency at popular cabaret bar The Village Inn. Expect all her usual games and shenanigans, making for an utterly fun and fabulously fantastic night out! There are delicious drinks offers to enjoy too, as well as the chance to party through till the crack of dawn. Go for it!

Friday 24 November - The Village Inn, Birmingham



Lady Diamond set to sparkle in Brum

A live cabaret performance from none other than Lady Diamond rounds off a great month of entertainment at Birmingham party bar Missing. The Sitges favourite is back in Brum for the night and will be teaming up with resident host LaQuefa to raise as much money as possible for World AIDS Day.

Sunday 26 November - Missing, Birmingham



A Glamorous night out!

No matter what night of the week you're planning to go out, be sure to head to Glamorous on Hurst Street in Birmingham. They're open every night until a staggering 6am! Boasting daily drinks offers, great DJs and an always fabulous atmosphere, it's a fantastic place to party!

Karaoke and disco with **DJ Nikki** every Friday & Sunday at Eden

If you crave something a bit different from a typical night out in Brum's gay village, look no further than Eden Bar's ever-so-entertaining evening of karaoke and disco, complete with a winning contribution from the venue's very own DJ Nikki! Have you got the voice of an angel, or maybe it's more like Honey G's? Whichever, the fun's certainly not in short supply, so get yourself along there asap!

Every Friday & Sunday - Eden, Birmingham

KY Kelly live at the award-winning Eden Bar!



Wrapping up November at Eden Bar is scene favourite KY Kelly. Expect a laugh a minute as she entertains the crowds with her wonderful wit and bostin banter!

Couple that with a fantastic atmosphere and you're set for a great night out!

Saturday 25 November - Eden, Birmingham

Play Your Cards Right with Miss Penny!



If you're looking for something to do on a Tuesday night, then check this out... Sausage roll loving drag queen Miss Penny hosts her very own version of Play Your Cards Right, with a guaranteed prize fund of £100 to be won each and every week! It certainly makes for a better night than watching the soaps on telly!

Every Tuesday - The Village Inn, Birmingham

**BEVERLEY
KNIGHT**

as THE FAIRY GODMOTHER

**DANNY
MAC**

as THE LEARMING

**MATT
SLACK**

as THE BUTTON

**SUZANNE
SHAW**

as CINDERELLA



CINDERELLA

THE
FAIRY GODMOTHER
OF ALL PANTOMIMES

THE GRUMBLEWEEDS

as THE BROKER'S MEN

CERI DUPREE PHIL RANDALL

as THE UGLY SISTERS

**19 DEC-
28 JAN**



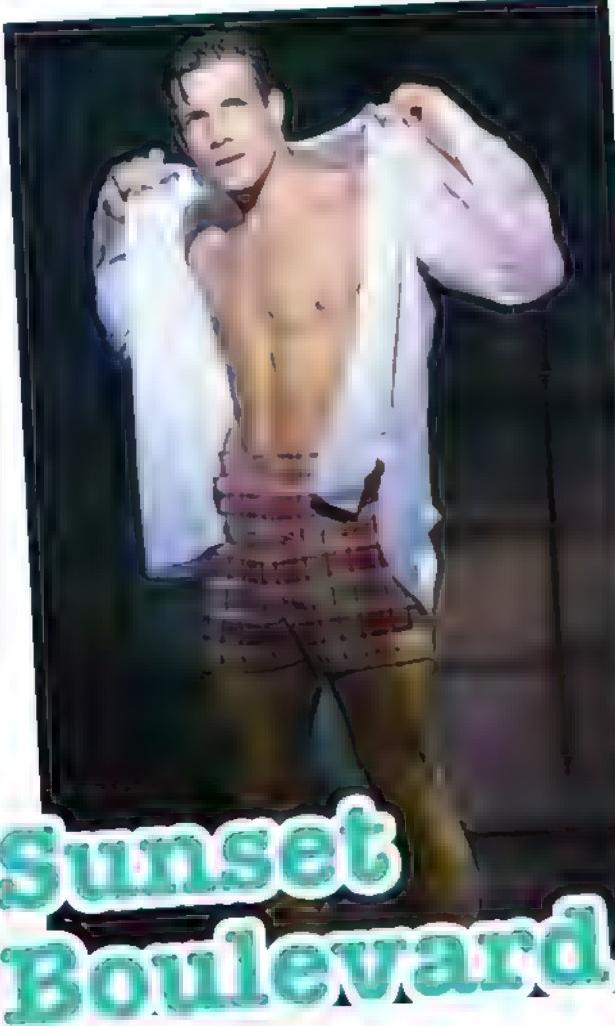
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What's On



Sunset Boulevard

Fellas who read Zone magazine and enjoy looking at other men - that'll be gay guys we're talking about there then, just to clarify - will have no trouble whatsoever deciding who to gawp at if they get along to this hit Andrew Lloyd Webber musical.

The role of debt-ridden young screenwriter Joe Gillis is being played by Hollyoaks favourite, Strictly Come Dancing finalist and magnificently muscled Danny Mac (just look at those perfect pecs and plenty more besides in the above photo!). Danny is one sexy fella and no mistaking - so much so, in fact, that we reckon you'll be lucky to get through the night without hearing at least one cry of 'Oooh, I wouldn't mind taking a trip up *his* Sunset Boulevard! ...

Mon 13 - Sat 18 November - Birmingham Hippodrome



Bananarama

Here at Zone, we love Bananarama - especially our music correspondent. He claps like a seal on a particularly potent batch of magic mushrooms at the very mention of the girl group with the bendy yellow fruit in their name. The holy trinity of popular popsters have been around for a good while now, strutting their sexy stuff long before many of our

luminous stars were even born. There are lots of great songs from the band's back catalogue that you might remember, including It Ain't Half Hot Mum, Material Girl and I'm Not In Love. There are also lots of great songs that your mama used to dance to, including It Ain't Half Hot Mum, Material Girl and I'm Not In Love.

Ballet Boyz

We love a bit of ballet, boyz! The mighty-muscled men with the not-to-be-undervalued skill of looking impressively masculine despite wearing terribly tight-fitting tights, make a welcome return to the region with brand new show Fourteen Days. The production is so-called because it features dance works that were created in just two short weeks (that's 14 days - geddit?) Choreographers contributing to the show include Javier de Frutos and Craig Revel Horwood.

Sat 18 November - Lichfield Garrick

Depeche Mode





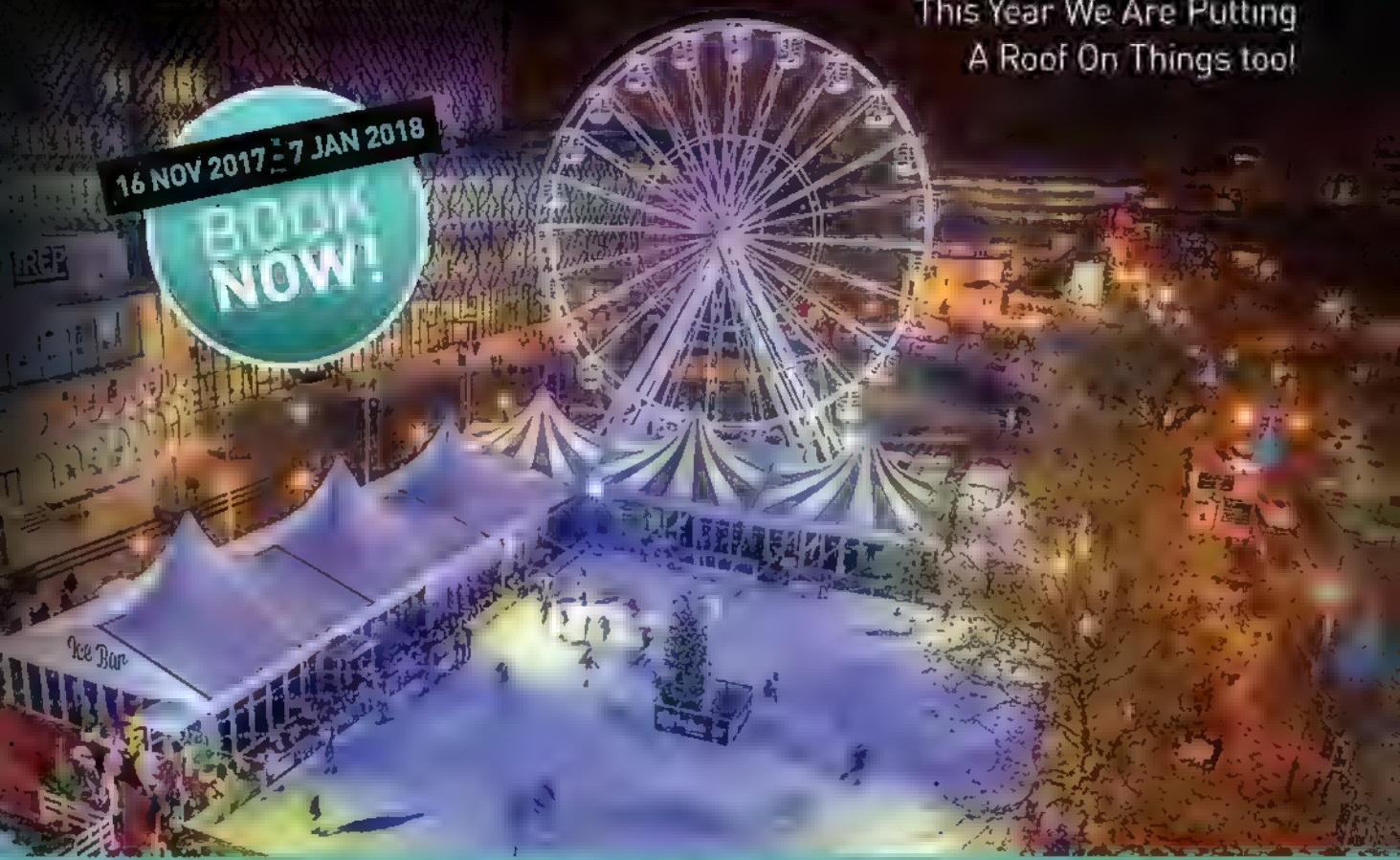
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SHOUT Festival



Stephen Fry

Given our repeated and utterly shameful failure to write editorial featuring big long words, giant intellectual Stephen Fry would probably eat a copy of Zone for breakfast - or maybe even use it as toilet paper, if whatever he'd had for breakfast instead of Zone had required him to respond to the call of nature.

Yet despite having a brain that's literally the size of Iceland (okay, okay, not 'literally' then), he seems to have successfully avoided wedging his head up his own back passage, and would appear to be a thoroughly nice bloke. Brand new show, *Live! In Mythos*, sees the Gigantic-brained One reimagining some famous Greek myths for modern times.

Tues 7 November - Symphony Hall, Birmingham



The Vaudevillians

We've interviewed her, she's on the cover of this issue and we're flagging up her touring show right here and now. And why the heck wouldn't we? When RuPaul's Drag Race sensation Jinkx Monsoon hits town, the only thing to do is shout about it from the rooftops.

Jinkx is joined on stage by Major Scales, for a show that tells the terrific tale of two 1920s vaudeville stars. Frozen in an avalanche, the pair are finally thawed out almost a century later, only to find that a gaggle of pesky pop stars have nicked all their best material. The utter rotters!

Sun 5 Nov - Stafford Gatehouse Theatre;

Sun 19 November - The Patrick Centre, Birmingham

Little Mix

With their mighty message of Girl Power and their LGBT-friendly approach to pop stardom, it would be hard to love Little Mix any more than we already do. The four-girl band earlier this year

Secret Love

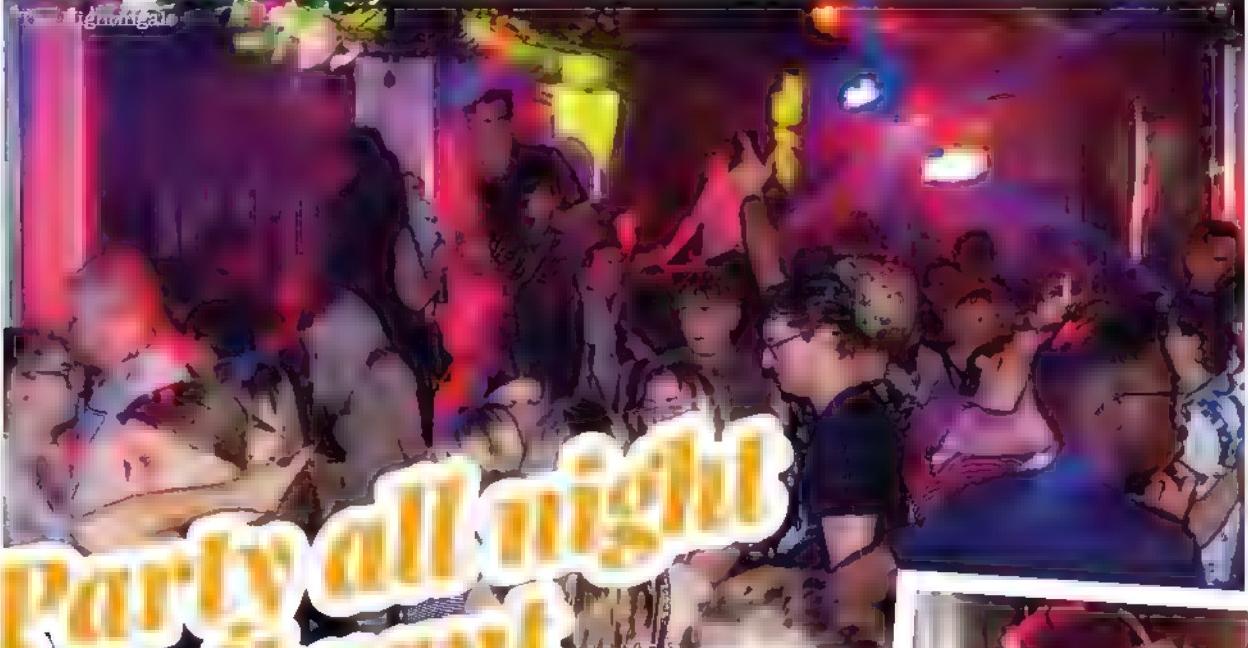
3T fans

were those still taking refuge in a set to be proud of who they

They appear in Birmingham in part of their Glory Days album, which features cheeky hit single *Shout Out To My Ex*.

Fri 17 - Sat 18 November - Genting Arena, Birmingham





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The Village Inn

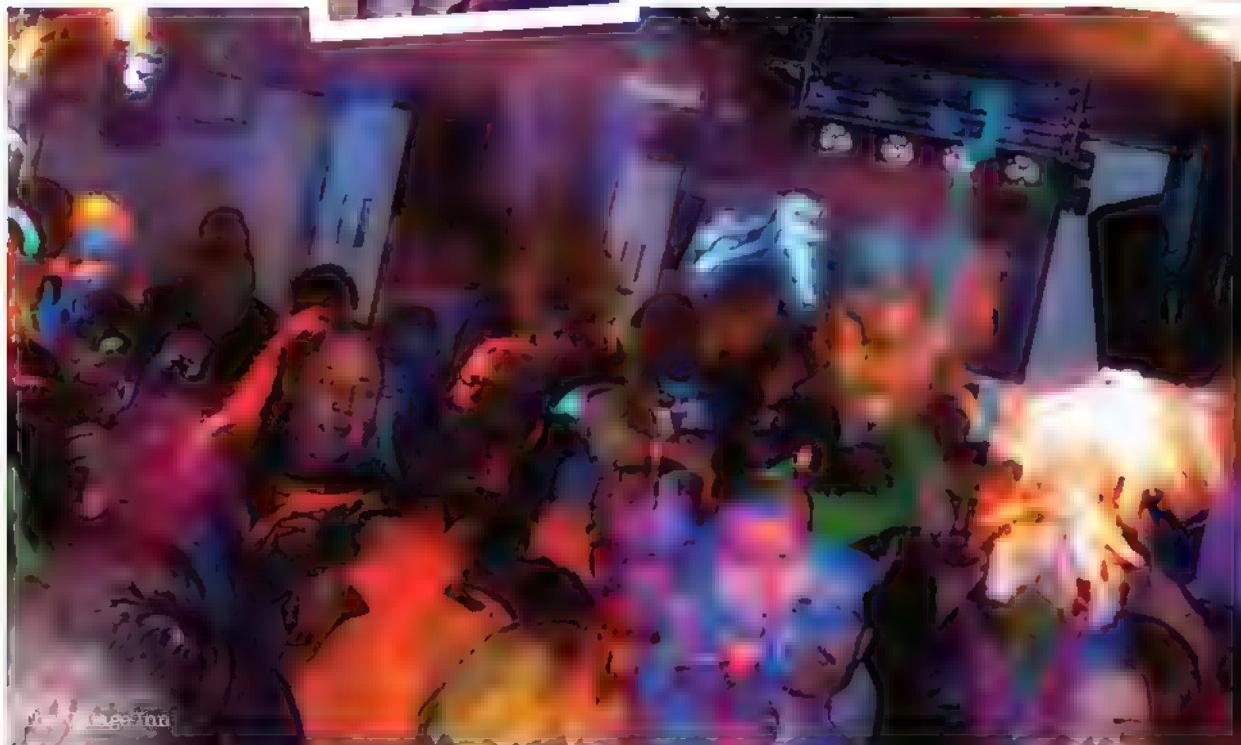


Scen





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Party all night in Birmingham



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A nightmare on Hurst Street

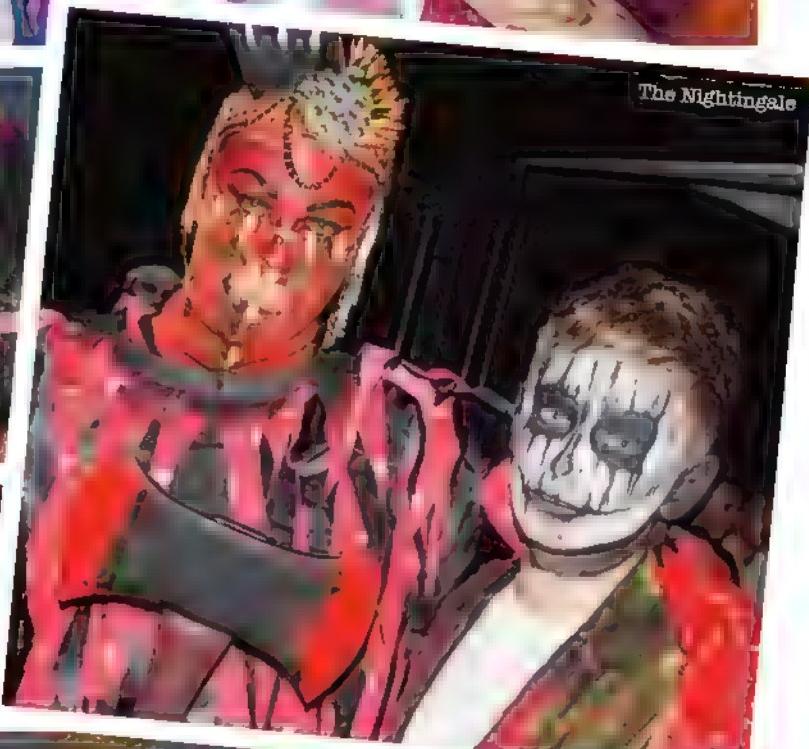
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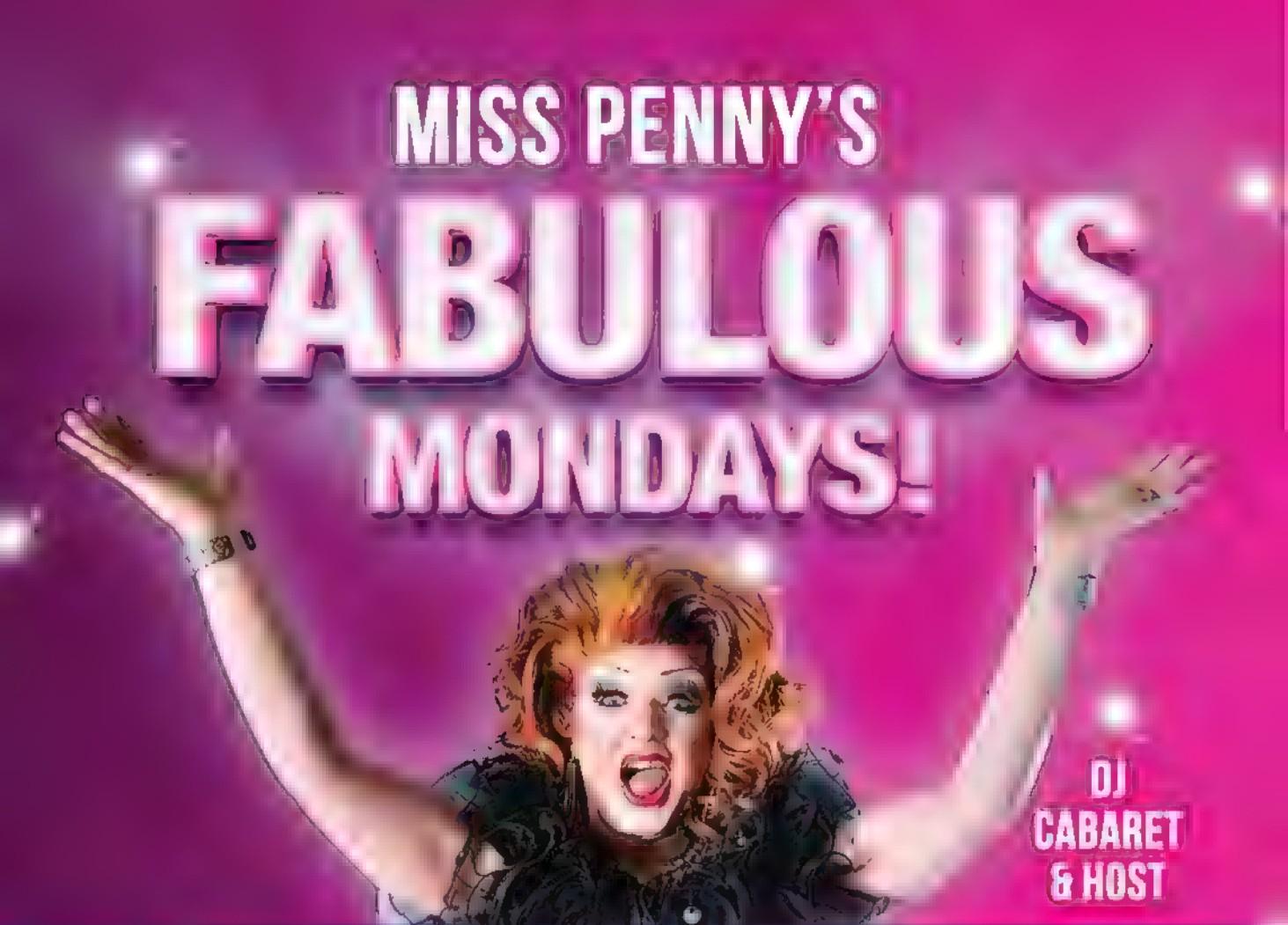
First there was Wolves Pride - then Wolverhampton gay club Gorgeous turned it up a notch with a live PA from Jedward!

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Pictures by First Reunion Media & Ricci Wellman

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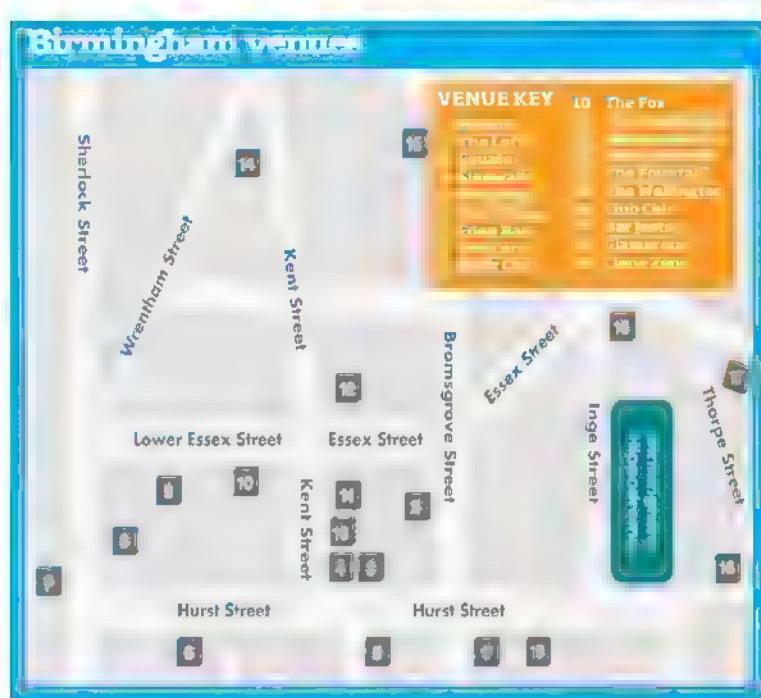
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challengers. Available in two limited edition colours 'Zen' and 'Warrior'. These sexy trunks cost just £18.25 from aussiebum.com.

To enter this amazing competition, all you need to do is visit midlandszone.co.uk and answer this simple question:

Which country would you often associate a Samurai with?

- A) Japan
- B) France
- C) Germany

**Competition closes
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You can also check out Trade Sexual Health:

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Google Pixel 2 ►

The Pixel 2 is the latest smartphone from Google. The next generation of the Pixel features the world's highest-rated smartphone camera, with a score of 98 from DxO Mark, a five-inch screen with an OLED display optimised for virtual reality, and a battery that charges up to seven hours in 15 minutes. It comes with either a 64GB or 128GB capacity – great for all those epic photos you'll take!

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◀ Google Home Mini

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Food and drink news from across the Midlands...

The UK's best cheese traders are paying Birmingham a visit this month as part of Cheese Fest UK, which lands at the Custard Factory in Digbeth on Saturday 18 November.

Featuring melted raclette, halloumi fries, cheese wheels, mozzarella sticks, mac'n'cheese and much more, the show also provides visitors with the opportunity to learn about which wines and beers go best with which cheese.

A unique Breaking Bad-inspired interactive cocktail masterclass is stopping off in Birmingham this month. Visitors to the event will be immersed in a scene straight out of the award-winning TV series when The Heisenbar visits Boxxed in Digbeth on 17 & 18 November.

Award-winning mixologist Rob Wood will be teaching attendees to make six cocktails, including Welcome To New Mexico and Breakfast With Walt Jr. One cocktail will even be served with the Breaking Bad classic, Los Pollos Hermanos chicken.

There'll be plenty of surprises to enjoy at the event too. Just be careful, though - you never know when Hank might turn up!

Tickets cost £40 per person and spaces are limited. For more information and to secure your place, visit facebook.com/weareheisenbar



Rofuto's latest menu reaches new heights

Birmingham's highest restaurant - Rofuto Sky Bar, located at the top of the Park Regis Hotel on Broad Street - has added over 25 new dishes to its menu, in celebration of a fantastic first year on the city's food scene.



Sticking to its popular Japanese Izakaya concept, Rofuto's new menu features sharer plates and tapas-style servings, as well as all the old favourites.

The new look menu includes a seafood sharer with whole grilled lobster, Pan Asian inspired salads, teriyaki grilled salmon, tempura king prawns and a sizzling one-kilogramme Tomahawk steak, fresh from the charcoal-fuelled Robata grill.

Fast-service vegan takeaway opens in Brum

A 100% plant-based fast-service eatery has opened in Birmingham's City Arcade. Fressh's 'cruelty free' menu, aiming to promote a healthier, more sustainable and ethical choice, uses responsibly sourced ingredients and eco-friendly packaging.

Open from Monday to Saturday, the menu features classic fast food dishes such as burgers, mac'n'cheese, Chicago-style hotdogs, meatball subs and meat-and-dairy free breakfast burritos.



Warwickshire restaurant The Cross has retained its Michelin star for a fourth year running.



The Kenilworth eatery is described by the 2018 Michelin Guide as a 'smartly furnished pub with eager, welcoming staff'. The guide continues: "Skilfully executed, classical cooking uses prime seasonal ingredients, and dishes not only look impressive but taste good too."

The award-winning restaurant is owned by Andreas Antona, who also owns the Michelin-starred Simpsons restaurant in Edgbaston, Birmingham.

The Cross started out as an inn way back in the 19th century and was recently refurbished to reveal its original features. It's the only eatery in the county of Warwickshire to boast Michelin-star status.

She Dazzle

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LIFE OF A THIRTYSOMETHING GAY

“God’s Own Country”

My friends had been raving about it; a new feature-length film, doing the rounds on the artistic circuit, that was an absolute must-see. I didn't take much convincing, so I headed to mac Birmingham with a gaggle of mates to see what all the fuss was about. What I hadn't imagined, though - as I walked through the door, popcorn in hand - was just how incredibly moving the film would prove to be.

For those of you who've seen God's Own Country, I'm certain you get what I'm talking about. For those of you who haven't, make sure that you do. Written and directed by Yorkshireman Francis Lee and set in his home county - in fact, on the next farm from where he grew up - the movie takes its lead from its environment. God's Own Country is former actor Lee's first feature film. Whilst not autobiographical, it draws on his childhood experiences of growing up on his dad's sheep farm, capturing not only the essence and beauty of the Yorkshire countryside, but also its sheer vastness and sense of bleak, even depressing, isolation.

The film itself is eloquent in its silences. For the first half of the movie, there's not much dialogue, as the two lead characters take centre stage. You immediately fall into the voids and begin to share their journey. The handsome Josh O'Connor plays Johnny, the son of a sheep farmer (Ian Hart) who's recently suffered a stroke and can no longer work on the farm. They both live with Johnny's grandmother (Gemma Jones) - and as anybody from Yorkshire will appreciate, there is no mincing of words between them. They push and peck at Johnny, not only to meet their overbearing expectations, but also to meet the very basic yet overwhelming need to survive. Life is tough and backbreakingly gritty, as Johnny shoulders the weight of responsibility for keeping his family from bankruptcy. He indulges in binge-drinking and casual sex with the odd guy to alleviate the pain of it all. In fact, the sex is so honest in Lee's film that at times it makes you feel like you're watching something with your parents that you shouldn't be! It's

unapologetic, and all the more beautiful because of it. What's refreshing with Lee's work here is that we finally have a British film with a leading gay character whose sexuality is not the central issue with his family - he's already out to his father and grandmother before we even meet them. But lost in the remoteness of Yorkshire living, his sexuality is not his driving trait. There's no mobile reception, no Grindr or Scruff and no gay village. It's refreshing storytelling.

Johnny's painful isolation and the overbearing expectations of his family resonate with a modern audience on so many levels. You don't have to be in the Yorkshire Dales to experience the same intense personal feelings - and this is one of Francis Lee's key points. Twitter is alive with a stream of people from around the country applauding the movie's emotional honesty.

With life continuing to be bleak for Johnny, enter lead character number two; the smoulderingly good looking Alec Secareanu, who plays Romanian farmhand Gheorghe. At first the pair far from hit it off - Johnny sees Gheorghe as a threat rather than a help. He's everything that Johnny is not. They differ on their approaches to work, their view of the land and much else besides. Yet as the film unfolds, so too do their personal journeys, which inevitably entwine. It's a story of breaking down boundaries between people and cultures and challenging intolerance. In an age where we now see intolerance fuelled by xenophobia, homophobia, racism and religious indifference, God's Own Country cuts across boundaries and sends out a carefully crafted message of respect. It holds to the truth that even with precious little tolerance, we can still find the good in each other. And once we find it, the results can be breathtaking and possibly even life-changing.

As intimacy blossoms, and both Johnny and Gheorghe embark on a very personal journey, the isolation of their environment and the harshness of Johnny's life is reimagined. He warms and reconnects to his landscape, prioritises his needs and finds a love



that he'd previously been too afraid to embrace. He is reborn. He learns that in order to love, we all have to open ourselves up to our greatest fears and vulnerabilities. In doing so, we discover things that people long for, but which they fail to acquire or achieve without first making a leap of faith. God's Own Country offers hope for a better future, and that simple message packs an enormous punch.

One of the things that struck me most while watching was that the cinema was filled with people of all ages, diverse cultural backgrounds and, I'm guessing, different sexualities. As the film credits rolled and the lights went up at the end, I saw audience members shedding tears, people sitting in silence, others talking fast and furiously about what they'd just seen, and yet still more who were quite evidently profoundly moved. God's Own Country had captured the imaginations of us all.

I've read some of the reviews and watched over the last few weeks as Twitter has been positively ablaze with messages of thanks, encouragement and support. The film was originally intended for only a few weeks' showing, but as support has built, so too has the movie's schedule - expanded by popular demand. The DVD will, I'm sure, not be too far behind.

It's also been refreshing to see how a general audience coped with the subject matter. There's very little mention of God's Own Country as a 'gay film' or 'another Brokeback Mountain'. It's treated as it should be treated - as a love story, a story of tolerance, journey and self-discovery... This is perhaps its greatest success.

"Kardashians"

If the official statements are true and the rumoured 'pregnancy bulges' are fact, the Kardashian/Jenner family will be adding greatly to their number over the next couple of seasons (seasons of their TV show, that is, not just the weather seasons).

The Kardashians are the most talked about family since the Kennedys - and since there are now so many more ways to talk about anyone, that really does constitute an enormous amount of talking.

I've just had a look at Kim's Twitter account (which is why I'm now going to have to bleach my eyes) and she has 56.1 million followers - that's approximately 56.1 million more followers than I have. To give this a bit of perspective, the population of England and Wales is currently 58.4 million.

These Kard/Jen babies will be born into fame. Just as Kim's first two babies are already regularly

photographed (in designer nappies with couture Lego presumably), the new ones will also be instant tabloid celebrities. The fame of the family is rivalled only by that of our own royals, and even then it's a pretty flimsy rivalry - where's Will's perfume brand or Kate's rapping career?

I've been trying to remember why they became famous (the Kardashians, not Will and Kate), and I'm not sure it's possible to pinpoint it. They were on TV, but then most of the population of the US seems to have been on TV at some time. They don't seem to have any particular qualities or 'talents' - wit, intelligence, amusing repartee, dazzling beauty, for example. All I can pin it down to is their collective willingness to take off their clothes, and their - putting this nicely - large arses.

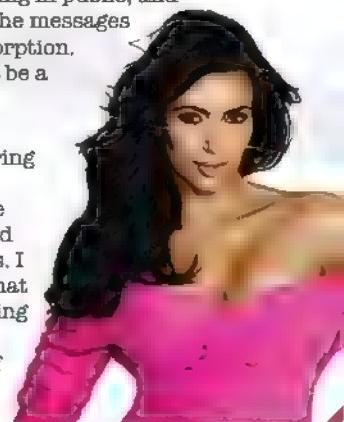
This was okay when there were one or two of them, but their fame is growing exponentially and their numbers are

increasing too.

Looking at Twitter alone, the equivalent of the population of England and Wales (minus, let's say, the population of Luton), is checking out Kim's words of wisdom. Each day, they are seeing those badger-muff eyebrows, taking on board the laissez faire attitude to wearing a decent amount of clothing in public, and contemplating the messages of pure self-absorption.

And this cannot be a good thing.

I hope these Kard/Jen offspring grow up to be scientists, peace campaigners and social reformers. I fear, however, that they are just going to add to the Kard'ass'ians of this world.



A large, blurry photograph of a shirtless man with his head tilted back, looking up. He appears to be in a car, with a steering wheel visible. In the background, there's a blurred cityscape with lights.

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Onwards and upwards

There's a strange story doing the rounds on Twitter at the moment about a high school in the US which recently staged the 1996 rock opera, Rent. It's great to see a group of teenagers shining a spotlight on some important issues - addiction, homophobia and Aids. But the school decided to make one huge and unfortunate change: Instead of Aids, some of the characters have - wait for it... diabetes!

It reminded me of a time a few years ago when I had some problems with a school where we ran a youth theatre. The students were performing a stage version of The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas. It tells the story of eight-year-old Bruno and his family, who,

during the Second World War, leave Berlin to take up residence near the concentration camp where his father has just become commandant. Unhappy and lonely, he wanders out behind his house one day and finds a Jewish boy of his age with whom he begins a forbidden friendship... The challenge here was that the school governing body didn't want to have any of their pupils playing Jewish characters, so the plot was changed to incorporate 'Blues' and 'Reds'.

On one level, both of these stories are laughable, but they're also an indicator of the way in which some adults are keen to avoid what they perceive to be difficult conversations with young people.

Things are nothing like as bad now as when I began my career as a primary school teacher almost 40 years ago, when the insidious Section 28 banned the so-called 'promotion' of homosexuality in schools and many of us feared losing our jobs. Thankfully times have changed. Civil servants at the Department for Education (DFE) in Whitehall, for instance, now report to an openly gay Education Secretary. And as you will see in the accompanying picture, the rainbow flag is plastered all over the DFE's office walls.

On a personal level, too, there's been a change. The school that wanted to rewrite history with The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas now has a new chair of its governing body. Me.



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THE VIRAL ROUND-UP

Here's what we've been looking at online...

We all do it - spend hours on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Often we're distracted from what we should be doing by cat videos and funny pranks - or by something feelgood that's been shared so much on the net it's officially classed as 'viral'. Well, here are some of Midlands Zone's favourites from the past month!



WARWICK ROWERS offer a teasing video glimpse of new fundraising naked calendar

Those hunky Warwick Rowers have been delighting us with their fundraising naked calendars for a good number of years now - and we're pleased to report that they'll soon be back with their 2018 offering!

Ahead of the calendar's release, the boys have been teasing us with a hot 'n' steamy video in which they display their oh-so-sexy buns! Check out the bum fun here: vimeo.com/234140714

CELEB SNAPS!

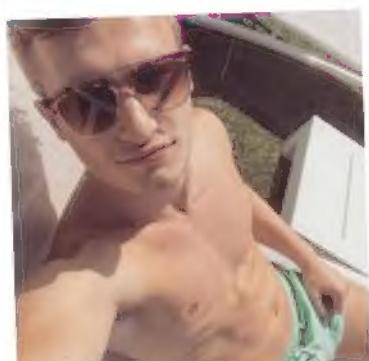
Our fave celebrity Instagram pics...



Andrew Christian model Nick Mascardo lets it all hang out (almost!) at the beach!



There's something cute about popstar and gay activist Troy Sivan!



Jack Laugher is one of the many British divers we enjoy!

Elders react to **RuPaul's Drag Race** for the first time!



RuPaul's Drag Race may be a worldwide phenomenon, but not everyone has seen it - and that includes plenty of folk from the older generation.

This hilarious new video features some fantastic reactions from 'more mature' people as they sit down and watch the hit drag show for the very first time.

We wonder whether they'll be tuning in more in the future?

Watch it over on YouTube at: youtu.be/8gwM9v_OwUc

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